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**CONNECTICUT MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN U.S. COURT TO USING
INTERNET TO ENTICE '12-YEAR-OLD GIRL' TO ENGAGE IN SEX**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that STEPHEN ARNOLD pled guilty today in White Plains federal court before United States Magistrate Judge MARK D. FOX to an indictment charging ARNOLD with using the Internet to entice a minor to engage in prohibited sexual activity.

Because of an amendment enacted on April 30, 2003, increasing the punishment under the federal law that covers this crime, ARNOLD faces a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 5 years. The maximum prison term for this conduct is 30 years.

ARNOLD was arrested on May 13, 2003, at the Nanuet Mall in Rockland County, New York, when he attempted to meet a "12-year-old girl" that he had enticed over the Internet to engage in sexual activity with him.

According to the Complaint filed earlier and today's guilty plea, the arrest was the result of an undercover investigation by the Rockland County Sheriff's Office, in which a detective pretended during Internet communications to be a 12-year-old girl.

The Complaint stated that on March 30, 2003, ARNOLD entered an IRC Relay Internet chat room called "ltlgirlsexchat" and initiated a conversation with "lissizy12," who indicated that she was a 12-year-old girl from New York. Using his "screen name," ARNOLD asked: "u do sex with older guys?" "Lissizy12" said: "not yet." ARNOLD said: "i would love to be your 1st." He suggested that they meet in a motel, where he would pay for the room. ARNOLD said that they could "get naked" and that "Lissizy12" could "have sex with me." "Lissizy12" ended the conversation by saying "ill try to come back [to this Internet chat room] if mom lets me."

According to the Complaint, on April 8, 2003, ARNOLD had another Internet chat in which he graphically suggested that "Lissizy12" meet and have sex with him. "Lissizy12" said that she lives near the Nanuet Mall in Rockland County and is named "Alissa." ARNOLD said that his name is "Steve." "Alissa" asked "Steve" whether he had ever had sex before with a 12-year-old girl, and "Steve" said he had.

The Complaint stated that in another Internet chat on April 9, 2003, "Alissa" asked whether the defendant was still

seeing the other 12-year-old girl. When the defendant replied that the other girl was too far away, "Alissa" replied, "good ... i want to be your only 12 year old." The Complaint also alleged that during this Internet chat on April 9, 2003, ARNOLD asked: "you are not a cop or anything? right?" "Alissa" replied, "your funny." ARNOLD explained: "i can get in trouble u know, right?"

According to the Complaint, in an e-mail on April 17, 2003, ARNOLD asked "Alissa" what grade she was in. On or about April 21, 2003, she sent an e-mail reply in which she said that she was in 6th grade.

The Complaint alleged that in a series of further Internet communications, defendant ARNOLD enticed "Alissa" to meet him on the morning of May 13, 2003, at a particular location in the Nanuet Mall, and he said that he would be wearing jeans, a green jacket and a blue cap.

On May 13, 2003, according to the Complaint, physical surveillance was performed at the Nanuet Mall by the United States Secret Service and the Rockland County Sheriff's Office. According to the Complaint, ARNOLD was seen going to the designated meeting point, wearing jeans and a green jacket, and meeting the height and weight description he had given to "Alissa". He was arrested at that point.

According to the Complaint, ARNOLD is a 31-year-old naturalized United States citizen who was born in India and who currently lives in Stamford, Connecticut. During a prior appearance in court, the defendant stated that he has an MBA degree.

Judge FOX scheduled sentencing for November 6, 2003. The sentencing will be conducted by United States District Judge COLLEEN MCMAHON ARNOLD.

Mr. COMEY praised the efforts of the office of Rockland County Computer Crimes Task Force and of the United States Secret Service, which worked jointly on this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney MICHAEL L. TABAK is in charge of the prosecution.

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